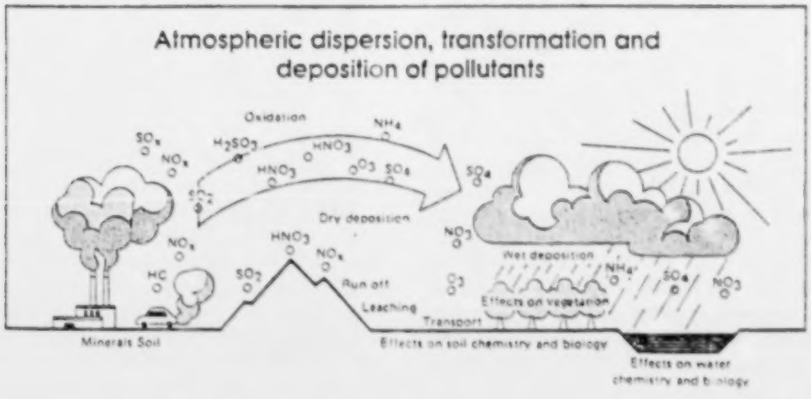
ECE Highlights

UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE No. 15 September 1992

A REGIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR ENVIRONMENT LEGISLATION

UN/ECE's EXPERIENCE



The region of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN/ECE), which is distinguished by its high overall level of economic development and natural-resource endowment, shares a number of important socio-economic characteristics and common environmental assets. It accounts for more than two thirds of world trade. The major share of modern technology is developed, manufactured and marketed by the countries of the region. On the other hand, the region represents more than three quarters of world pollution and is the largest consumer of natural resources and energy. This has placed a heavy responsibility on ECE countries for environmental protection, sustainable development and rational use of natural resources.

These problems, mostly transboundary in nature, represent important and urgent tasks which can only be accomplished by better cooperation among Governments of the region to ensure that activities under their control do not damage the environment of other States or areas beyond their national jurisdiction. To this end, the need for a regional legal framework becomes even more important.

The response of ECE countries to this challenge has been swift and productive. Cooperation in the field of the environment has developed into one of the priority activities of the Commission. States participating in the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) provided an additional impetus for the elaboration of four regional conventions and related protocols dealing with major aspects of environmental protection and sustainable development under the auspices of the Commission. ECE Governments attach special importance to the Commission as a forum not only for the elaboration of regional legal instruments but also for follow-up action to implement them.

The Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution and three of its four protocols have already entered into force as efficient instruments for the abatement of transboundary air pollutants. A second generation of protocols is envisaged for pollution control, based on the concepts of critical loads and cost-effectiveness along with additional considerations. Three other Conventions on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context, on Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, and on the Transboundary Impact of Industrial Accidents, are in the process of ratification. In the meantime, signatories to these conventions have taken steps to implement the respective Conventions to the maximum extent possible, pending their entry into force.

UN/ECE has published a compendium of the environmental conventions elaborated under its auspices. The legal instruments contained in the compendium also provide elements and approaches which could be of assistance to the countries of other regions of the world in their respective campaigns to halt and reduce environmental degradation and to promote sustainable development. It is in that spirit that the publication was submitted to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) which took place in Brazil in June 1992.

NEWS BRIEFS

STATISTICS AND DEMOCRACY

The fortieth anniversary of the UN/ECE Conference of European Statisticians (CES)

The Conference of European Statisticians (CES) held its 40th annual session in Geneva from 15 to 19 June 1992. This important anniversary was marked by a commemorative session on 17 June which was attended by the presidents and directors of national statistical offices of the UN/ECE region, members of the diplomatic corps and political figures from the region. The theme of the ceremony, "The role of statistics in the democratic process at the end of the 20th century", is also the title of a commemorative book published for the occasion.

The CES is the largest forum for multilateral cooperation in the field of official statistics in the northern hemisphere. It brings together the presidents and top executives of the national statistical offices of the 43 members of UN/ECE. The Conference has reacted rapidly to the new socio-economic situation in Europe and especially to the needs of transition countries, devoting considerable attention to transition processes of statistical offices in central and eastern European countries. Aside from its traditional functions of holding sessions, arranging exchanges and promoting regional cooperation over the past few years, the CES has taken on the role of a forum for dialogue and statistical policy coordination among the three main international and supranational organizations that are active in the region: UN/ECE, the OECD and EUROSTAT.

The celebration of the 40th anniversary provided an opportunity to take stock of the pioneering work undertaken by the CES since its first plenary session in June 1953. It also provided an occasion for reflecting on the main challenges which the CES faces today and for giving new impetus to international statistical cooperation. The "Declaration on the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics in the ECE Region", adopted by the Commission in April 1992, was emphasized as a charter for future statistical activities. This Declaration is of great political significance as it manifests the firm commitment of all ECE member countries, including those in transition, to a set of common principles and shared values which are based on a democratic political system and a market economy.

The Prime Minister of Bulgaria visits UN/ECE

The Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria, Filip Dimitrov, and the Governor of the Bulgarian National Bank, Todor Vulchev, met with the Executive Secretary of UN/ECE, Gerald Hinteregger, on 27 April 1992 for discussion on key fields of cooperation between Bulgaria and the Commission. The Prime Minister emphasized the importance his country attaches to foreign direct investment, questions of privatization of formerly State-owned industries, and the role of the banking and credit system. The Bulgarian guests expressed their appreciation for the work of UN/ECE in assisting the central and eastern European countries in transition, particularly its programme of workshops. The visit to Geneva provided an opportunity to follow up the dialogue in January 1992 when the Executive Secretary visited Bulgaria and was received by the Prime Minister.

Exhibition of statistical publications produced in the ECE region

Seminar on Road Traffic Safety

More than one hundred experts from the UN/ECE region met for a Seminar on Road Safety from 23 to 24 March 1992. They evaluated the results and experiences gained during the Road Safety Week organized in October 1990 under the auspices of UN/ECE and indicated future actions aimed at improving road safety. The discussion concentrated on the best way to influence the behaviour of road users. Participants at the seminar stressed the need to continue the work of UN/ECE in the area of harmonization of road traffic regulations, road signs, technical and operational standards of roads and road vehicles, including the promotion of international activities for improving road safety. It was recommended that the Commission organize another International Road Safety Week directed to young drivers as a special target group.

Round Table on Economic Recovery in Central and Eastern Europe

A round-table discussion was held on 1 June 1992 on the "Conditions for Economic Recovery in Central and Eastern Europe" in conjunction with the annual session of the Senior Economic Advisers to ECE Governments.

Panellists included: Mr. L. Hoffmann, President, German Institute for Economic Research, Berlin; Mr. H. Kierzkowski, Professor, Graduate Institute of International Studies, Geneva; Mr. A. Soos, Chairman, Committee for Budget, Taxes and Finances of the Hungarian Parliament, Budapest; and Mr. J. Ourinson, Director, Centre for Economic Analysis and Forecasting, Moscow. Mr. A. M. Vacic, Director, Division for Economic Analysis and Projection, UN/ECE, acted as moderator. The participants analysed the conditions of new growth in the transition countries which have experienced significant falls in output levels and a deep recession with high and rapidly rising unemployment. They addressed the effect of stabilization policies and structural change,

the conditions for economic recovery in the area of domestic economic policies, economic and trade policies of the market economies, western support for the transition countries and relations with international organizations. The Round Table was the third event of this type organized by UN/ECE. A transcript of the proceedings can be obtained from the UN/ECE Information Officer.

WORKSHOP UPDATE

Rehabilitation Engineering Concept for the Countries in Transition

Dr. Therese von Schwarzenberg, Patron of REHAB-3, and Dr. Martin Bojar, Minister of Health of the Czech Republic, during the opening plenary session.

The third, and final, Workshop on Rehabilitation Engineering (REHAB-3), organized in close cooperation with the International Federation for Medical and Biological Engineering and the Regional Office for Europe of the World Health Organization, was held from 24 to 27 May 1992 at Trebon-Spa, Czechoslovakia. Important conclusions and recommendations adopted by the more than 70 experts who participated from 18 countries and 13 international and regional organizations will, among other things, help to launch a special supportive programme aimed at improved access for elderly and disabled persons in countries of central and eastern Europe to the new rehabilitation technologies. The REHAB-3 workshop was followed on 28 May 1992 by an international seminar on rehabilitation engineering, RESEM'92, jointly sponsored by the University of Delaware and the Charles University in Prague.

Management of East-West Joint Ventures

A Workshop on the Management of East-West Joint Ventures was organized by the Italian Institute for Foreign Trade in cooperation with UN/ECE in Rome on 7 July 1992. Management training has been given a high priority by western governments as part of their bilateral and multilateral assistance programmes for central and eastern Europe. The workshop compared and assessed the experience relating to the management of joint ventures as well as relevant information from enterprises contemplating establishing such ventures in the countries in transition. Participants drew on the experience and advice of international experts from East and West on how to overcome the management deficiencies in joint ventures.

OFF THE PRESS

The Environment in Europe and North America: Annotated Statistics

A new statistical data collection issued by the Statistical Division of UN/ECE and the UN Statistical Commission attempts to answer a wide range of questions related to the environment in the ECE region. The study was presented to the heads of statistical offices at the 40th anniversary session of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES). The publication comprises two parts. Part one is devoted to standard statistics, time series and indicators on several aspects of the environment. Part two is a statistical monograph on agriculture as a complex environmental issue. A comprehensive description is given of the linkages between the actual environmental effects and the physical, social and economic characteristics of agricultural production. The publication contains a large number of tables and illustrations.

The Environment in Europe and North America: Annotated Statistics 1992. Sales No. E.92.II.E.14. Price: $US 54.00.

OTHER SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

General

Five years of Perestroïka: Results, Problems, Prospects — Discussion Papers, Vol. 1 (1991), No. 2. Sales No. GV.E.91.22. Price: $US 25.00.

Environment

Environmental Conventions elaborated under the auspices of the UN/ECE (E/F/R).

Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (E/ECE/1268).

Code of Practice for the Conservation of Threatened Animals and Plants and other Species of International Significance (ECE/ENVWA/25). Sales No. E.92.II.E.16. Price: $US 12.00.

Statistics

Annual Bulletin of Coal Statistics for Europe 1992, Vol. XXV. Sales No. E/F/R.92.II.E.12. Price: $US 25.00.

Forest Fire Statistics, 1988-1990 (ECE/TIM/58).

Annual Bulletin of Steel Statistics for Europe. Sales No. E/F/R.91.II.E.13. Price: $US 25.00.

READEX FICHE

Industry

Bulletin on World Trade in Engineering Products. Sales No. E/F/R.92.II.E.7. Price: $US 55.00.

WHERE TO ORDER

The publications listed with sales prices may be ordered from: **United Nations Bookshop, Sales Unit, Palais des Nations, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland** and a number of bookstores in the ECE region. Send cheque or money order in US dollars made payable to: UNITED NATIONS PUBLICATIONS.

Those publications listed without a sales price may be obained from the Information Officer, Economic Commission for Europe, Palais des Nations, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland.

ECE CALENDAR

Selected Events

1992

September

1-4	Seminar on the Impact of Increasing Dimensions of Loading Units on Combined Transport
14-18	Seminar on the Use of Information Systems in Forest Management (*Garpenberg, Sweden*)
15-17	COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS (*Lisbon, Portugal, followed by a Study Tour in Portugal, 18-25 September*)
23 (p.m.) -25	SENIOR ADVISERS TO ECE GOVERNMENTS ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
29-1 Oct.	Joint FAO/ECE/ILO Committee on Forest Technology, Management and Training (*Cosenza, Italy*)

October

5-9	Symposium on Product Quality in the Agri-food Sector (*Murcia, Spain*)
7-9	Working Party on the Chemical Industry
12-16	Symposium on Opencast Coal Mining and the Environment (*Nottingham, United Kingdom*)
13-15	Seminar for Statistical Offices of Mediterranean Countries (*Palermo, Italy*)
13-16	New Materials and their Application in Engineering Industries (*Kiev, Ukraine*)
20 (p.m.) -23	TIMBER COMMITTEE
21-23	Working Party on Steel
21-23	Meeting of Experts on Human Settlements Problems in Southern Europe (*Seville, Spain, preceded by technical visits, 19-20 October*)

November

2-4	Working Party on Coal
10 (p.m.) -12	COMMITTEE ON ENERGY
17-20	Executive Body for the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution
17-20	Seminar on Building Pathology and Prevention of Disorders (*Prague, Czechoslovakia*)
23-27	Seminar on Housing Forecasting and Programming at Regional and Local Levels (*Strasbourg, France*)

WORKSHOPS ON ECONOMIES IN TRANSITION

September

10	Electricity tariffs, electricity use and environmental protection, the particular case of economies in transition (*Lausanne, Switzerland*)
12-13	Industrial policies in the economies in transition (*Budapest, Hungary*)
14-16	Energy conservation and energy management in buildings (*Copenhagen, Denmark*)
14-18	Conformity assessment and/or harmonization (*Prague, CSFR*)
21-26	Problems of transition of the forestry and forest industries sector of the countries of central and eastern Europe (*Moscow, Russian Federation*)

October

1-2	Problems related to the possible organization in Europe of the unified inland navigation market (*Vienna, Austria*)
5-8	Strategies for and coordination of assistance to countries in transition in the forestry and forest product sector (*Ossiach, Austria*)
13-14	Application of the OECD Good Laboratory Principles (*Balatonfured, Hungary*)
19-29	Training for managers of energy facilities and large energy users (*Bucharest, Romania*)
28-30	Cadastral reform and improvement of real property, and land registration systems (*Romania*)

November

2-5	Evaluation of the results of transition process in statistical offices (*Bucharest, Romania*)
30-2 Dec.	Environmental impact assessment in land-use planning (*Kosica, CSFR*)

For further information, contact:
The Information Officer,
Economic Commission for Europe,
Palais des Nations,
1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland

Telephone: (41 22) 734 60 11
Ext. 2893 or 2684
Telex: 41 29 62
Telefax: (41 22) 734 98 25

ECE Highlights provides a round-up of news and information on major ECE events and publications and is available free of charge from the Information Officer.

Printed at United Nations, Geneva—GE.92-22091—September 1992—3,000—ISSN 1014-3866